

# PENINSULA MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL NATURAL HAZARDS MITIGATION PLAN

## DISASTER MITIGATION ACT OF 2000



Peninsula Hazard  
Mitigation Planning  
Committee

January 2006



## **Executive Summary**

The rich historical assets and vast natural resources of the Lower Virginia Peninsula have a long history of vulnerability to a multitude of natural hazards. From colonial-era hurricanes that moved immense quantities of sand to create the spits, points, and creeks of today, to recent tornados that displaced elderly inhabitants, the Peninsula's residents live with the history of past events and constantly strive to prevent damage from future events.

In order to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from natural hazards, the communities of the Lower Virginia Peninsula joined forces to prepare this Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. Comprised of local government representatives from Hampton, Newport News, Williamsburg, James City County and York County, the Peninsula Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee (PHMPC) met regularly over the course of 12 months during 2004 and 2005, to generate the elements of this plan. The elected boards of each jurisdiction reviewed and officially adopted the plan, making it a governing document for their community. AMEC Earth and Environmental was contracted to assist the committee throughout the planning process. AMEC's role included facilitating all meetings of the PHMPC, preparing presentations for all Public Meetings, and instructing committee members about the role of mitigation in hazard preparedness. AMEC coordinated the reviews and comments of committee members, other state agencies including VDEM, and FEMA.

This plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. This legislation reinforced the importance of pre-disaster infrastructure mitigation planning to reduce disaster losses nationwide, and was aimed primarily at streamlining federal disaster relief and programs to promote mitigation activities. By adopting this plan, the communities of the Peninsula will be better prepared to integrate mitigation actions into other community programs by:

- building public support for mitigation activities,
- developing effective public education policies regarding mitigation, and
- obtaining disaster-related grants in the aftermath of a disaster.

The elements of this plan coincide with the primary planning tasks performed by the PHMPC. First, the committee conducted a risk assessment by analyzing and prioritizing the critical natural hazards that threaten the region: floods, hurricanes, nor'easters, winter storms, tornados, and wildfires. The vulnerability of each community to each critical hazard was examined in terms of assets at risk by dollar value, and critical facilities (police/fire stations, hospitals, schools, etc.) at risk. A capability assessment examined existing programs and mechanisms in place to mitigate the effects of natural hazards.



Armed with a detailed risk assessment, the PHMPC set regional mitigation goals to address areas where improved capabilities could reduce vulnerability. Goals, and objectives for achieving the goals, were further refined into mitigation alternatives, or “recommended action items”. These detailed tasks for each community form the crux of the plan, and can be broken down into the following categories:

- prevention,
- property protection,
- structural projects,
- natural resource protection,
- emergency services, and
- public information.

With the adoption of this plan, each community’s sub-committee is converted to a permanent advisory body referred to as the Mitigation Coordinating Committee (MCC) whose primary duty is to see the plan successfully carried out. Plan maintenance must be an ongoing effort to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan, and to update the plan as progress, roadblocks, or changing circumstances are recognized. Monitoring and updating will take place through an annual review by the MCC and a five-year written update to be submitted to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and FEMA Region III, unless disaster or other circumstances lead to a different timeframe.



Peninsula Multi-Jurisdictional  
Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan  
January 2006



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# 1.0 Introduction

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000), approved by Congress and signed into law (Public Law 106-390) in October 2000, is a key component of the Federal government's attempt to reduce the rising cost of disasters in the United States. The Act establishes the Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Program (PDM) and new requirements for the post-disaster Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). It emphasizes the importance of mitigation planning in communities.

In an effort to highlight the importance of planning in the mitigation process, the DMA 2000 law requires local governments to develop and submit natural hazard mitigation plans in order to qualify for PDM and HMGP grant funding. Specifically, the Act requires that the plan demonstrate "a jurisdiction's commitment to reduce risk from natural hazards, serving as a guide for decision makers as they commit resources to reducing the effects of natural hazards." The final plan must be adopted by the jurisdiction and then approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

In order to facilitate DMA 2000 compliance for its member jurisdictions, the Peninsula Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee (PHMPC) developed a Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan pursuant to the requirements of DMA 2000. The Peninsula's hazard mitigation planning process also incorporated steps to meet the requirements of the Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) program, which will qualify its member jurisdictions for additional Federal flood mitigation assistance.

Hazard mitigation, defined, is any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to human life and property from hazards. Planning is the process of setting goals, developing strategies, and outlining tasks and schedules to accomplish these goals. In preparing this plan, the PHMPC identified the natural hazards that threaten their jurisdictions, determined the likely impacts of those hazards, and assessed the vulnerability of the communities to the studied hazards. The PHMPC also assessed their capability to address those hazards through the existing programs and policies. The PHMPC then set mitigation goals and prioritized appropriate strategies to lessen the potential impacts of hazard events.

## 1.1 Scope

The Peninsula Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies goals, information, and measures for hazard mitigation and risk reduction to make the participating communities more disaster-resistant and contribute to the planning area's long-term sustainability. The plan not only addresses current concerns, but has also been developed so it can be used to help guide and coordinate mitigation activities and local policy decisions for future land use.

This plan follows FEMA's DMA 2000 planning requirements and associated guidance for developing Local Hazard Mitigation Plans. The guidance sets forth a four-task mitigation planning process:



- organize resources,
- assess hazards and risks,
- develop a mitigation plan, and
- evaluate your work.

The plan also utilizes the criteria set forth in FEMA's Crosswalk Reference Document for Review and Submission of Local Mitigation Plans.

## 1.2 Plan Organization

The Peninsula Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan is organized into seven sections. The organization of the plan is as follows:

**Table 1.2 -Plan Organization**

Section Number	Title
1.0	Introduction
2.0	Regional Profile
3.0	Planning Process
4.0	Regional Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
5.0	Community Specific Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment, including Regional and Community Capability Assessments 5.1 City of Hampton 5.2 City of Newport News 5.3 City of Williamsburg 5.4 James City County 5.5 York County
6.0	Regional Mitigation Goals and Objectives/Specific Community Actions 6.3.1 City of Hampton 6.3.2 City of Newport News 6.3.3 City of Williamsburg 6.3.4 James City County 6.3.5 York County
7.0	Plan Implementation and Maintenance

In the future, if communities wish to create a community-specific plan, appropriate sections can be utilized.